

Women Veterans and Diabetes Awareness

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of Americans with diabetes has tripled to 23.5 million in the past three decades. More than 10 percent of women have some form of diabetes—but about half don't know it. Diabetes is one of the most common diagnoses in women Veterans treated at VA facilities.

Diabetes is a disease marked by high levels of blood sugar. It can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, limb amputation, kidney damage, nerve damage, and blindness. However, treatment and vigilance can greatly reduce the likelihood of complications. People with type 1, or juvenile-onset diabetes, need to frequently test their blood-sugar or glucose levels and adjust their insulin and diet accordingly. People with type 2 diabetes—the most common form—can often control their disease by eating a healthy diet, exercising, losing excess weight, and taking medication.

The VA can help fight diabetes. Recent studies show that the Veterans Health Administration excels in diabetes care compared with other health care organizations scoring 13 percent higher than the national sample. *My HealtheVet* is a free, online program to educate Veterans about health care topics, including diabetes, and allows them to track their care. In addition, each VA facility has a Women Veterans Program Manager to assist women Veterans in getting the proper treatment and services. The VA's goal is to prevent diabetes and diabetes-related complications with management programs that keep blood sugar or glucose levels close to a normal range through diet and exercise and medication management.

Women are now the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. Veterans. The number of women Veterans is expected to increase dramatically in the next 10 years, and VA health care is in high demand by the women Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Department of Veterans Affairs understands the health care needs of women Veterans and is committed to meeting these needs. Women Veterans served and they deserve the best quality care.

References:

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